1:Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
AX5 Vedda AX5

166 563 In one instance there had been intermarriage with Sinhalese, and we suspected this in other cases, though the majority appear to be reasonably pure-blooded.

361 231 These people make chenas[1] on which they live temporarily in bark-covered huts; Plate X, figure 1, represents the chena settlement of the local group of the Namadewa *warige*, some of the members of which are shown in Plate X, figure 2. They gather honey and hunt, several of them possess guns, and some of them rear cattle for the Sinhalese villagers. Indeed, for [222 224] Veddas their lot is singularly happy, since they live in the heart of the park country where game is still abundant. Bailey first induced some Veddas in the Nilgala district to make chenas about the middle of the last century, before which all the Veddas in this district were probably living their natural hunting, honey-gathering life.

361 511 It is not often that a community that has taken to the semi-civilised life of chena cultivation is seen, in which its members are so healthy and well fed, for Veddas dislike settling down and do not generally do so until they find they can no longer subsist on the game in the country, when they either drift into Sinhalese settlements, or make extremely rough chenas for themselves, the produce of which is seldom sufficient to feed the community. Besides which, as is the case with the Sinhalese peasants themselves, the crop is often pledged to Moormen pedlars before it is reaped. The poor Veddas then subsist as best they can on yams, honey and berries, and usually fall [164] a prey to fever. Several Veddas in this wretched condition were seen between Namal Oya and Bandaraduwa, while those at Godatalawa were scarcely better off.

In the Nilgala district the conditions are different. Chena making and cattle rearing had been introduced while game was still abundant, families are still able to leave the chena settlement and hunt and gather honey, living during such times in rock shelters within their own hunting boundary. However, the

[1] Bailey defines a chena as "a patch of ground cleared from the forest for cultivation. The jungle is burnt down, a crop taken off, and then suffered to grow up again: it is cultivated again after intervals of from five to ten years." *Trans. Ethnol. Soc. N.S.* Vol. II, 1863, p. 281.

1;Seligmann & Seligmann E-5 (1907-1908) 1911
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Kuṭuruṇ kuṭuruṇ kiyannā
Tāla piṭaṭa mayi māla
Kōṭa dimana hora waturuṇi
Kōṭa dimana hora waturuṇi
Kāḍiṇa paccaleyak gamata
Binara yannaṭa bal piṭi kerimayiṇi
Madagē piṭa yanni dannā
Kaliya wala nagili
Ehaṭ bihāgena watili
Kobbe wali nagili
Ehaṭ bihāgena watili
Wal-kabbe wala duvana damāgena
Wīruṭi iṇagē piṭaṭa damāgena
Kaḍiyā hallaṭ iccerahaṇagena
Enḍela poṭuhanna nayidi
Enḍela poṭuhanna nayidi
Mā miṭi mā miṭi mā diyiyā
Mā miṭi mā miṭi mā diyiyā.

Ah, our husbands! Let us go to Kokkagala. Let us go to Madegala. (I) cannot go to Kokkagala. I cannot go to Madegala. The dove of the Kakuru-kanda is uttering *kuṭuruṇ, kuṭuruṇ*. There has been rain in the high land. There has been muddy water bringing down logs. There has been a *yaku* ceremony (lit. *yaku* house) below the hill. (I) cannot go on the ground as there is dew. Let us ride on the buffalo. Having climbed up the *kīḍiya* creeper, on its breaking having fallen; having climbed up the *kabbe* creeper, on its breaking too, having fallen; putting down the bow (made) of *wal-kabbe* creeper, putting the canes at the back of the head[1]; sending in front the dog Kaḍiyā, (you are) to come, they say (or he says or we say) Poṭuhanda Nayidi. (You are) to come, they say (or he says or we say) Poṭuhanda Nayidi. *Mā miṭi mā miṭi mā diyiyā, Mā miṭi mā miṭi mā diyiyā.*

All the remaining songs except the last were collected from the village Veddas of the Uva Bintenne; all are of one type and with a single exception (No. XVII) all are related to each other and to the two songs immediately preceding them which we obtained at Nilgala. No. XVII, the exception just referred to, is extremely Sinhalese in tone and thought. The *gemara* spots referred to are the light patches on the body, due to the attacks of a parasitic fungus, which are much admired by the peasant Sinhalese of Uva and the Eastern Province.

[164]

[1] Or "carrying them hanging round the neck."

4:Lewis N-5 (ca. 1906-1918) 1919
AX5 Vedda AX5

I remarked that while walking through the jungle, though provided with a knife, Dissan Hamy rarely used it to cut away any intercepting branch or creeper, these being invariably bent to one side by the hand. 481

I observed this custom many years ago when travelling through a distant village called Uda Wellawoy at the foot of the Haldummulla hills, and I understand it is to prevent persons from finding a hunter's trail.

I made inquiry, in addition to direct observation while exploring the Vedda country, as to the prevailing diseases among the inhabitants, and what was done as regards remedies. The result of my investigation led me to conclude that the commonest disease among adults was fever, but I could get no statistics on which I could rely to form an opinion as to the percentage this particular disease afforded as compared with others. 164 ●

It was, however, difficult to discriminate in what proportion of fevers typhoid was to be regarded, as I found in many cases the people did not know the difference. Dysentery appears to be well known, and is locally called "Le-pachchane," but I was told that it was not nearly so common as fever. Fever is not common as compared with the prevalence of that disease in the Tamankaduwa District.

Venereal, I am told, is unknown, and probably for reasons I gave earlier in this Paper. It occurs, however, more in the neighbourhood of civilised centres. I did not see a single instance of goitre, or of elephantiasis, though I cannot suppose the latter is unknown. I found numerous cases of sores on the feet and legs of both adults and children, but these were explained as being in all cases due to accidental injuries. Bronchitis, however, is common, more especially in children, who also appear to be commonly troubled with anæmia, which may or may not be directly due to intestinal parasites.

As regards treatment, I found that the remedy was invariably based on the theory that diseases may be divided into two great classes—heating or inflammatory, and the opposite—therefore the cure was to be found in those specifics which were opposed to these two heads of causation. For example, if a man had a violent cold, the "milk" of the coconut could 753 757

S: Spinel D-5 (ca. 1920) 1945 AX5 Vedda AX5

We had hardly gained the base of the rock when we heard human voices and soon came up with three men and their dogs. One fellow carried a gun, the others had axes hitched to their shoulders. They were on their way to a devil dancing ceremony at a house of illness some miles away; but abandoning their project they accompanied us to their homes.

In a small clearing stood half a dozen leafy shelters. Outside one of these, three women with infants at the breast were seated roasting small yellow flowers. The rest of their people were at work on a *chena** close by. We summoned them and soon we had all the Veddas of the *Kongaha Ulpotta* before us—some six or eight men and about a dozen women and children. They were a poor lot bearing the stigmata of malaria and framboesia. There was but one old man among them. The children were emaciated and languid.

Most of them showed strong traces of Tamil admixture, especially the women; what poor ornaments they wore, their clothing, and even their very names were Tamil; and so were their predilections if the coy smiles one or two of them bestowed on the fine Tamil that accompanied us signified anything. There were at least three men, however, true to Vedda type—short of stature, wild-eyed, with beardless face and upstanding frizzly hair.

They had no bows among them, except as playthings for the children, but made us one as a memento and stained it with charcoal and *thimbiri* to give it the appearance of use.

The huts were fashioned of wattle and leaves, and thatched with dry grass. Their domestic appointments comprised earthen pots, a wooden pestle and mortar, bark rope, and a deer skin or two.

Fruits, flowers, wild yams, honey, the flesh of animals, *kurrukkan*† and maize formed their food. The meat they fancied most was that of the langur and monitor lizard which they hunted with the lazy mongrels that loitered about. They eat abundantly and at any hour when food is plentiful; but as a rule one good meal a day is all they expect; in times of dearth they bear hunger stoically, chewing incessantly a few varieties of bark they carry in pouches fashioned of cloth saturated with melted wax (*ilee rethee*). Partial nomads, they spend many months of the year under trees and in caves. Where the *puln*, *vera*, *kung*, or *mora*‡ fruit is ripe, where the hives are, there they take their women and children, dogs, and chattels and go.

"How often do you bathe?" I asked one of them, the smell of their ring-wormed bodies suggesting little acquaintance with water.

"What bathing for us," he replied. "We fall into a stream once in a way and get out again; that is our bath. And we only do that when our stomachs are full. When we are hungry we don't care for anything; we can eat even a man then!"

In answer to the question how they measured distances and what constituted a mile, the reply was, "We walk till our legs hurt, then we place our axes on the ground, sit down, take out our pouches, and chew a quid; that is our mile".

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*A patch of forest cleared for cultivation

†*Eleusine coracana*

‡*Minusops hexandra*, *Memecylon capparis*, *Schleichera trijuga*, *Nephelium longana*, respectively.

Vela was an interesting little chap and, unlike the others, had always something to say for himself. He entertained us with charms, pleasing lullabies, and songs of rock and stream demons that came as fast as ae leaves shaken by the wind, in the guise of bears, their mouths adrip with human blood. These he sang despite warnings from the others who reminded him that he had sucked a chicken bone, which was a dangerous thing to do before invoking devils lest it invite their anger.

Coming to a pool, brown with decaying leaves, we asked if the water was good. "Very good," said a Vedda, adding the epicurean touch, "Those fallen flowers floating there make the water sweet; they are the flowers that give good honey."

It was high noon when Veddas left us to go in search of food. But Vela lingered to tell us of the oppression of the local headman. Did they but catch a young deer or pea-chick that came their way they were prosecuted. The visiting apothecary too was bad; he gave them no medicines except for gifts of honey or meat; and the poor fellows had little enough for themselves.

Having visited a cave containing the battered remains of an old Buddha, we continued our circuit of the rock; and after a walk of an hour and a half under a burning sky, came to the Veddas of the *Kudda Ulpotha*. These had no huts of any sort, but merely sat grouped in families under various trees. It was the season of the *kung* fruit, of which there was plenty about. Women were boiling down the luscious pulp with which to make cakes, or extracting from the seeds an oil said to be good for sores and wounds. Very fond of the fruit they all were; it had been their only sustenance for days. One little urchin, his mouth be-ringed with parangi ulcers, was licking clean a coconut shell containing the acrid juice, with a relish worthy of a tastier dish.

The patriarch of the settlement, Naida, and his wife were typical Veddas; but here again most of the others showed Tamil admixture. One man had a large scar across his face. The manner he came by it illustrates well the aggressiveness of the little Ceylon sloth-bear. When out collecting honey he saw a she-bear and her cub. Realising the certain disaster of such an encounter he cautiously climbed a tree; but in doing so snapped a twig and gave himself away. With a series of blood-curdling cries she charged him, and clambering up the tree, bit and clawed him severely. A large flap was torn from his face. This his father sewed up with a thorn and fibre, and doctored with a result that might have done credit to any surgeon. Living as they invariably do in the neighbourhood of rocks, and having kindred tastes in honey, yams, and fruit, the Veddas and bears often encounter each other, as the ugly scars on many of the men testify.

As, footsore and tired, we rounded the southern end of the rock towards evening, we met parties of Veddas returning with basketfuls of *kung* fruit. One youth was up a tree making the jungle ring to his song as he beat down the berries. As it darkened we reached Manampitiya, but not before we had worried a blind old owl that had descended to a streamlet to quench its thirst.

It is hard to forget that first experience of the Veddas in their homes: those voices in the jungle, that sight of their huts among the trees, and of their women roasting dainty little flowers for food.

Spittel D-8 (ca. 1926) 1948 AXS Vedda AXS

were loath to purchase their intimacy with gifts. Time enough for that, when we had won them over by less humiliating means. Besides, these Veddas were evidently spoilt, and we wished to show them they were not the important personages they imagined themselves to be. 123

"We are going then," said Handuna. It was now our turn for dejection. Was it for such an ungracious issue we had travelled so far?

I had a last card, having brought some neosalvarsan, a sovereign remedy for yaws so rife among these people. The offer was received with indifference. There was only one case among them, they said, and the patient was too ill to come. This being just what we wanted, I offered to visit them the next morning. [164]

"You cannot come where we live unless we allow you," said the irrepressible Kaira. "And we won't show you our caves or anything, unless you give us presents."

Sick with exasperation and disgust at the behaviour of these impossible children, I told them they could take our offer or leave it as they chose, and turned to other work. The result was a grudging acquiescence; and, leaving a guide behind, they went away.

A word of explanation regarding the sophistication of a people so remote. They were in fact about the purest-blooded Veddas extant; indeed, it was to this very circumstance they owed their disappointing behaviour; for it had attracted Seligmanns among them. What that implied may well be imagined. To obtain the valuable sociological information with which his book abounds, he had gained the confidence of these folk with scrupulous consideration and kindness, showering on them gifts of all kinds. Moreover, the patient investigation of the most intimate details of their lives by such a man, heightened their self-esteem. Of this we had an amusing illustration. I was obliged to admonish a group of Sinhalese that embarrassed us with their attentions. A Vedda stifled up and, tapping me familiarly on the shoulder, whispered, "Those people don't like us, they are jealous of us. We and you gentlemen are one; they are different!" 156 114 [166]

To dismiss these Veddas as spoilt uninteresting folk would imply failure to discern their innate simplicity, beneath the veneer of pose and importunity, for which contact with an indulgent stranger had been responsible. In their homes they still are as artless as their forbears were before ever white man set foot on these shores.

We were out hunting early that afternoon, when a sudden snapping sound arrested our attention. The Vedda we were with listened a few seconds. "Catching *kalagoyas*," (monitor-lizards), he said laconically. The excited barking of a dog and rebuking human voices soon confirmed his conjecture. Going up, we found two men, one of whom carried a large quivering monitor just killed; while two dogs, still spirited with the chase, danced round their victim and growled and snapped at us. One of the men now set about to disjoint the quarry's tail at the middle, leaving it connected only by a tag of sinew; then, slitting the subcutaneous web, he rove the tail through till it locked at the division, making the reptile eat its own tail as it were, and carried it neatly in a loop. The monitor is best hunted at high noon; after four in the afternoon it takes to trees and holes. 224 231

S. Spittel D-6 (ca. 1930) 1945 AXS Vedda AXS

these Veddas. Bingoda is not all Veddá; essentially it is a Sinhalese chena village of about six or eight families, within a stone's throw of which are the crude huts belonging to the few surviving Veddas. Through a tangle of overgrown scrub we reach them; they are not so numerous that we cannot easily name every single Veddá there.

These we have met before, Suthubanda, Gama and Badapissa; it was they who led us such a chase at Galmode. In the first hut we find the swarthy Gama and his comely young wife Kalu—his fifth experiment in matrimony: and he barely twenty-five! Not far from this is Suthubanda's abode, in which are his wife, the skinny Thuthi, mother by previous marriage of Gamma; their two little boys, Handuna and Naida and girls Kumi and Punji. Handuna is the quaintest brat imaginable; he is ash-coloured from top to toe, through crouching by the hearth all night to keep warm his naked body; for, all he has for cover is a little strip of loin cloth drooping erratically from a slack waist-string that sags well below his nates; his rotund abdomen accommodates an enormous spleen; with hands crossed over shrugged shoulders to keep the chill awa[illegible] he gazes quizzically at you.

A[illegible]way from these two homes, across the stream, is the only other Vedda hut. Unlike those of Suthubanda and Gama which are of wattle and boat, this is a sadly dilapidated mud structure once occupied by a Moor. It is the most pathetic and curious menage here, and belongs to Kaira brother of Suthubanda. His wife Rasedonna, a hideous squint-eyed thing, is mother by a previous husband to Heenthuthi the twelve-year old wife of Badapissa (Muthua), Kaira's younger brother! A more ridiculous pair it would be hard to find: the wife a mere child, the husband barely more. The Veddas favour such early marriages, saying that, growing up thus together, the two learn to love each other well. Be that as it may, it does seem a most piteous travesty of human matings. Huddled by the hearth and shivering with ague, is old Thanthi mother of the clan, and wife of the dead chief Neela. And, lastly, we have here the most pathetic figure in all Bingoda—Kumani, a girl of fifteen, dust-besmeared, ulcerated, crippled, and so scantily clad that she is ashamed to stand lest she reveal her nakedness. A misery to herself and others, she sits apart with face shyly lowered, taking timid glances every now and then, like some wild thing, from large black lustrous eyes that might have shone befittingly on the face of some proud beauty.

To these, though they now dwell apart at Mullegama, we must add Kaurala and his family, for he too was of Bingoda, and is maternal uncle of Suthubanda. By his two wives, Balli and Ranni, he has four little ones, Kaira Vannaiya, Herratha, Kalua and Sela; and two daughters, Ranni and Dingi.

These details, though perhaps tedious, serve to bring out vividly the intimate inter-relationships of the Veddas, their apparent disregard of appearance or age in their choice of wives, the promiscuity of life in their one-roomed homes—mother, child and father all lying huddled together in a little space. For all that it must not be assumed that Veddas are devoid of a moral code. A man may have more than one wife, it is true; and, if it pleases him, he may cast her aside like a worn garment; but to each man his own woman while she is his; that is the Vedda law which all respect.